

Technology changes how we live so we shouldn't be surprised when it changes how we give. Sponsored events used to mean paper lists, a Biro and lots of asking people. Today it means social media, online giving opportunities and a wider reach than ever before. Yet the heart of giving remains the same: a great cause, making a difference and a confident ask.



There's an app for that

Digital giving

Do you remember the 2014 Ice Bucket Challenge for MND which, as they say, went viral? In 2013 MND received 161,000 donations. The Ice Bucket Challenge generated 927,000 donations in just *three weeks*, the majority being £5 text donations. The money helped fund Project MinE which allowed scientists to identify a gene variant associated with the incurable condition and encouraged MND charities to work together. ⁱ

The Ice Bucket Challenge skewed online giving data but when excluded the average online gift in 2014 was £78.59, a 13% increase on 2013 and a 49% increase on 2010. In June 2016 Just Giving, pioneers of online giving since 2001, passed the \$4 billion milestone of monies raised. ⁱⁱ

Online giving represents about 15% of charitable income, although with wide variation across the sector. As you might expect, younger people are more engaged with digital giving. A 2013 USA survey (and the trends are followed here) found that 62% of 'Generation Y' (aged 18-32) would give by mobile phone and 47% via a website whilst 56% view online videos about charities they support. In our churches these younger adults are least engaged with regular planned giving. But digital giving is not just for the young. Boomers aged 49-67 give 43% of total USA giving; 42% give via websites, engage with social media extensively. 38% of boomers and 46% of matures (68+) give to places of worship compared to just 22% of Gen Y. ⁱⁱⁱ

The challenge for churches - and it is not an easy one - is to make the most of this new world within our limited resources. Chapter five of *Beyond the Collection Plate* offers an overview and hints at possibilities, including:

1. Online giving platforms, like *Just Giving* or *give.net* from Stewardship, support fundraising events and social media promotion and can also facilitate regular giving.
2. Text giving is effective in high profile campaigns but take up by smaller charities is patchy and thus far the church experience is weak but there is potential.
3. The smartphone is changing our lives. Familiarity with mobile payments must surely normalise mobile giving in due course.

A confident 'digital ask'

Digital giving is a rich and formative medium but at heart good giving still means a good ask and donor engagement. Buttons on websites and posters about text giving are no substitute for a compelling cause and a confident digital ask. Further, as someone once said, no matter how 'high tech' we are we must always remain 'high touch'. We have personal relationships with many of our givers so keep asking, thanking and telling people the difference their giving has made.

That second gift

Finally, the focus of much digital giving is the one off gift to the compelling cause, but the bedrock of church and much charitable income is that regular, thoughtful planned giving. "A person doesn't truly become a donor until they make their second gift".

^{iv} In different ways church and charity share the challenge of translating one off gifts into regular donations.

In conclusion, our churches have limited resources and digital giving is not a magic bullet but it is part of a multi-channel stewardship ministry which gives people choices around how to give. Let's explore the art of the possible in our digital age.

Notes and Resources

- ⁱ The Guardian 27th July 2016
- ⁱⁱ www.blackbaud.co.uk/ukonlinegivingtrends; Just Giving [press release](#) 6th June 2016
- ⁱⁱⁱ The Next Generation of American Giving at www.blackbaud.com with a handy infographic [here](#)
- ^{iv} Stewarding Donors for Lasting Support Following a Disaster by David Lamb (www.blackbaud.com)